

To become a state

Territory had long wait

Washington Territory had to wait 30 years after Oregon became a state to be accepted into the Union. Looking across the river, residents of Camas and Washougal often wondered why the injustice: Oregon could legislate its own destiny, while on the north side of the Columbia the territorial government was nearly powerless.

Then, as now, partisan politics stood in the way of "progress." The politicians gave many excuses for postponing statehood, such as small population, underdevelopment and lack

beginning to make a big contribution to the economy of the country.

Finally, public opinion forced the Congress into reluctant action. On Washington's birthday of 1889, the necessary enabling act was passed, calling upon the people of Washington, Montana and the Dakota territories to draft and adopt constitutions.

The Washington constitutional convention convened in Olympia appropriately on July 4. The vote was to be in October.

state Grange had influenced them, or visa versa.

When the voters approved the new constitution they also elected the state's first officers. There were two candidates for governor, Elisha P. Ferry, the Republican, and Eugene Semple, the Democrat. Both had served as territorial governors, Semple from 1887 until the spring of 1889. Semple was a Clark County resident and owner of a sawmill at Vancouver. Another Clark County man, Addison Lindsley, was the Republican candidate for

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of adequate transportation. The real reason was the balance of power on the Congress. If Washington became a state, the territories of Montana, Idaho and the Dakotas would certainly clamor for immediate recognition.

So what? The partisan trends in the far western territories had not yet jelled, and it was difficult to predict what would happen to Republican (or Democratic) majorities in Congress if statehood were granted. However, by 1882 the rest of the United States had learned a great deal about the far west. The railroads were being built, population was skyrocketing and far western timber and agricultural products were

Meanwhile, Grange organizations from around the territory met in Camas in September of 1889 to organize a state Grange and to pass resolutions concerning the new constitution. The delegates voted against the constitution because it made a provision for raising the salaries of state officials, but contained no provision for cutting them!

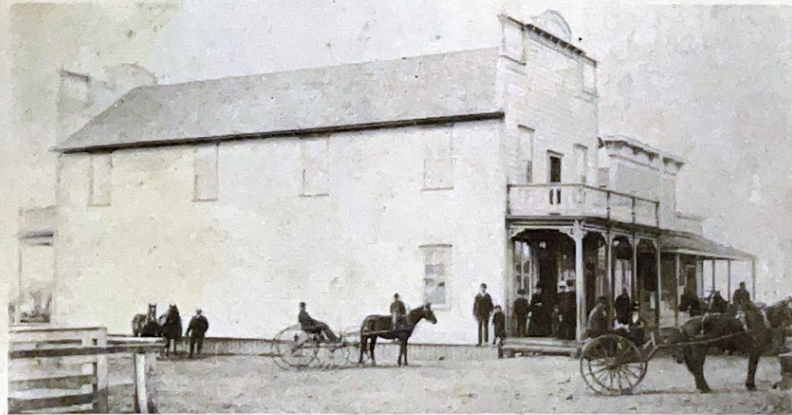
When the returns were all in, the people of the new state had approved the document by four to one. It carried in Clark County also, but not in Washougal, Chelatchie or Battle Ground, which were considered at the time "hotbeds" of Democratic or Populist sentiment. No doubt the action of the new

state treasurer.

Today if a local man ran for governor he probably would carry Clark County without difficulty. Not so in 1889. The county was solidly Republican except for a few precincts. Ferry beat Semple in his own county two to one, Semple lost all precincts in the county except Battle Ground, Pollock (LaCenter), Chelatchie and — you guessed it, Washougal!

No so with the Republican Lindsley, however. He carried all but two precincts: Battle Ground and Washougal.

To this day Washougal continues to vote Democratic.



WASHOUGAL'S FIRST STORE, built by Al Kersey for Joe Durgan, was located on Main Street, across the street from Braun's Hotel. On left, in photo, is Henry Sadewasser Sr. with horse team. On right, in the cart, is William Steenson watering his horse at the town pump. On the porch of the store is the D. H. Gary family with unidentified men. The man with the horse and buggy is possibly named Jorgensen. Wagon and driver unknown.